

AN ANALYSIS OF *RIVER MELOS* AND *SONGS OF THE WOLF*

BY ANDREA CLEARFIELD

A CREATIVE PROJECT

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS

FOR THE DEGREE

MASTER OF MUSIC

BY

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BALL STATE UNIVERSITY

MUNCIE, INDIANA

MAY 2021

Throughout the course of the past few decades, the music community and industry has seen an increased interest in creating an environment that celebrates and elevates the work done by people who have historically been oppressed and underappreciated in the field. One of the factions that has seen this push toward appreciation has been women in musical composition. While much progress has been made, the desire to increase knowledge on lesser-known women composers still remains. Composer Andrea Clearfield proves to be a notable example of a woman composer whose exceptional works should be acclaimed. Through an analysis of two of her works for horn and piano, *Songs of the Wolf* (1994) and *River Melos* (2014), it is clear that these works are exemplary in their genre because of Clearfield's skilled use of theoretical and compositional techniques. They attest to her status as an accomplished and talented composer regardless of gender.

Clearfield was born and raised in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and has remained in the area for her entire life, even through her higher education years. She received a Bachelor of Arts in Music degree from Muhlenberg College, a Master of Music degree in piano from the University of the Arts, and a Doctor of Musical Arts degree in composition from Temple University. Clearfield also served on the composition faculty at University of the Arts for more than twenty years. Over the course of her career, Clearfield has composed more than 150 works in numerous genres, ranging from operas to multimedia performances, and she has had works premiered by the Philadelphia Orchestra.<sup>1</sup>

In the recent years, Clearfield has been composing a number of works inspired by fieldwork that she did in Tibet to document the indigenous music of the region. She documented 130 songs from the region, and supplied the people who live there with access to digital

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<sup>1</sup> "Long Bio," Andrea Clearfield, composer website, Andrea Clearfield, updated 2012, <http://www.andreaclearfield.com/bio/>.

recordings of those songs so that their future generations would not lose their music. Clearfield is in high demand as a lecturer and has been offered several composer-in-residence positions, including at the Curtis Institute of Music, the University of Chicago, and Indiana University. She is currently on the Philadelphia Grammy Board of Directors and runs the Philadelphia Salon concert series, which she founded.<sup>2</sup>

Clearfield's success as a composer is made clear by her accomplishments, and also by the quality and high standard of composition with which she writes. In *Songs of the Wolf* and *River Melos*, Clearfield's skills as a composer are evident in how she uses form, pitch structure, range, melody, rhythm, and the use of horn playing techniques to create vivid images and stories in the minds of her listeners.

*Songs of the Wolf* was commissioned by Norwegian horn player Frøydis Ree Wekre and premiered in 1994 at the International Horn Symposium with Wekre on horn and Clearfield on piano. Clearfield's intention behind composing *Songs of the Wolf* was to write a piece for Wekre that was symbolic of her native country and evocative of Nordic woods and the metaphor of a wolf within them.<sup>3</sup> Throughout the piece, these concepts and symbols are readily audible due to Clearfield's ability to compose music that evokes the images that she wishes to put forth to her listeners.

The first movement of *Songs of the Wolf*, titled "Wolf Night," is based on a poem also titled "Songs of the Wolf" by Manfred Fischbeck.<sup>4</sup> The poem has a plethora of images and descriptive words in it that serve to represent those symbols and images that are reminiscent of Wekre's native country. The second movement, titled "La Loba," is based on a story in the book

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<sup>2</sup> "Long Bio," Andrea Clearfield, composer website.

<sup>3</sup> "Songs of the Wolf," Andrea Clearfield, composer website, Andrea Clearfield, updated 2012, <http://www.andreaclearfield.com/works/chamber/songs-of-the-wolf/>.

<sup>4</sup> "Songs of the Wolf," Andrea Clearfield, composer website.

*Women Who Run With the Wolves* by Dr. Clarissa Pinkola Estes.<sup>5</sup> Estes' book is a compilation of stories based around the archetype of the Wild Woman that Estes collected during her own ethnological travels. The Wild Woman archetype is the force behind instinctive nature and is supposed to engender strong womanliness. "La Loba," translates to "the wolf," and in the story it is referencing a legend referred to as "The Wolf Woman." "La Loba," is an old legend that has been passed down over time and is set in the southwestern region of North America, located around the border of the United States and Mexico. The story is about an old woman who is part of a group called "bone people," and she gathers bones of deceased wolves and sings over them, eventually reviving the body of a wolf and bringing it to life.<sup>6</sup>

Clearfield achieves her goal of paying tribute to Wekre's homeland and the idea of a wolf through many compositional techniques, however, the use of extended techniques in the horn is the most unifying way that this is attained. Throughout the piece, there are many instances where the sound of a wolf howling and crying is created by ascending and descending glissandos in the horn. The descending glissandos are just a bend in a held note to the pitch a half step below the original pitch, creating a sad and descending cry. These descending glissandos are most prevalent in the first movement, however Clearfield unifies the two movements by also including this material in the second movement. She also utilizes ascending glissandos, which create a different howling sensation than the descending glissandos, because these have a higher sense of urgency and haste (see Figures 1-3).

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<sup>5</sup> "Songs of the Wolf," Andrea Clearfield, composer website.

<sup>6</sup> Clarissa Pinkola Estés, *Women Who Run With the Wolves* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1992), 27-28.



Figure 1: *Songs of the Wolf* movement 1, mm. 29-31 descending glissando.



Figure 2: *Songs of the Wolf* movement 2, mm. 77-79 descending glissando.



Figure 3: *Songs of the Wolf* movement 2, mm. 12-13 ascending glissando.

When the horn plays the descending half-step glissandos in the first movement, it is accompanied by descending half-step movements in the piano line as well, unifying the two voices in the piece. Clearfield does not just use glissandos to evoke the sounds of a wolf in the piece, she also attains this imagery by simply having the horn player hold notes with a longer duration. While it is a simple technique, it is quite effective towards Clearfield's end product. For example, in m. 25 of the first movement, Clearfield repeats a concert G held in the horn four times, and then at the end of the final repetition, ends with the descending half-step glissando (see Figure 4). Each of these occurrences, even those that do not end with the glissando, evoke imagery of a wolf crying. The sounds of the wolf also do not solely occur when the horn holds notes with a longer duration. In m. 128, the piece is at a faster tempo and the meter is constantly changing, yet the horn is still playing ascending glissandos (see Figure 5).



Figure 4: *Songs of the Wolf* movement 1, mm. 25-29 concert G's held for a long duration.



Figure 5: *Songs of the Wolf* movement 1, mm. 128-135 ascending glissandos at a faster tempo and a shorter duration.

Another extended technique for horn featured in *Songs of the Wolf* is stopped-horn.

Clearfield's use of this technique creates an echoing effect, often meant to signify something creating the music in the distance. The first instance of stopped-horn in the piece is in m. 138 in the first movement, directly after the wolf howls at the faster tempo, creating contrast (see Figure 6). In the second movement, stopped-horn is much more common and the echoing effect creates an ethereal color when combined with the piano part. Clearfield lends the echoing stopped-horn melody in the second movement to telling the story of La Loba, allowing the timbre and range of the horn to represent the Wolf Woman singing over the bones of the deceased wolf (see Figure 7).



Figure 6: *Songs of the Wolf* movement 1, mm. 138-144 first instance of stopped horn in the piece.



Figure 7: *Songs of the Wolf* movement 2, mm. 26-30 stopped horn on top of ethereal piano part.

The horn techniques that Clearfield used to compose *Songs of the Wolf* are accompanied by many compositional techniques and choices she made that also contribute to the imagery and complexity of the piece. In her melodies, Clearfield uses the buildup and release of tension to create impact in the piece, especially at the beginning of the second movement. The movement starts with a hectic and perplexing piano part that does not clue the listener into any sort of meter or regular rhythm, and she gradually transfers this piano part to the horn finally entering with an ascending glissando in mm. 12-13, bringing the listener back to the familiar sounds of the wolf. A similar technique is used at the beginning of the first movement, which starts slowly and tentatively then speeds up and crescendos gradually, creating tension in the increasingly more urgent melody, eventually landing on the sounds of the wolf and releasing the previously built tension. In m. 135 of the second movement, the horn begins a cadenza section based solely on the cries of the wolf. Clearfield could have chosen from a wide range of material in the piece to

base the cadenza on, yet she chose to focus entirely on the unifying factor of the wolf. The cadenza occurs over one lengthy *accelerando* and *crescendo* and moves the range of the horn higher as well. In doing so, Clearfield also creates an increasing sense of tension and urgency in the simple horn line eventually leading to the reentrance of the piano and an exciting last segment of the piece (see Figure 8).



Figure 8: *Songs of the Wolf* movement 2, mm. 136-140 excerpt from horn cadenza leading to the reentrance of the piano.

In addition to the use of extended horn techniques and interesting melodies, the form of *Songs of the Wolf* also contributes to the effectiveness of the piece. As seen in the table below, the form of the first movement is ABCACD, ending with a Coda section. While this movement can be placed into a somewhat conventional form diagram, it does not follow conventional formal rules. For example, the returns of sections A and C begin as familiar material seen in their first occurrence, however they quickly prove to not be entirely familiar, and move on to other material. This loose interpretation of the form serves to represent the freedom of the nature in Wekre's homeland.

Table 1: Form of movement 1 of *Songs of the Wolf*

<i>Songs of the Wolf</i> Movement 1 Form						
A	B	C	A'	C'	D	Coda
mm. 1-34	mm. 35-63	mm. 64-90	mm. 91-119	mm. 120-135	mm. 136-173	mm. 174-end



The beginning of the A section in the first movement is always characterized in the piano by the return of an open fifth on D and A leading to a minor-sixth interval of D and B $\flat$ . In the first A section, the horn line enters in m. 2 on D and then slurs to A, highlighting that same open fifth (see Figure 9). Typically, when the descending glissandos occur in the horn, they are accompanied by the piano also descending by one half step. However, in the B section, the horn line rises in pitch, whereas the piano line features descending motion in contrast to the horn. At the very end of the movement, the horn plays the familiar descending glissandos, yet this time the piano accompaniment ascends by a half step, rather than descending a half step with the horn as expected (see Figure 10).

Figure 9: *Songs of the Wolf* movement 1, mm. 1-6 open fifth moving to a minor sixth in piano that signals the beginning of each A section.

Figure 10: *Songs of the Wolf* end of movement, 1 featuring descending motion in the horn versus ascending motion in the piano.

The form of the second movement is much more predictable and organized than the first movement, as seen in the table below. The form is AAB on a large scale, and each of the large sections can be broken down further into smaller sections. The level of organization in the form of the second movement is unexpected, given the wild nature of the story of La Loba, and serves to juxtapose the chaos of the Wolf Woman with a clearly formulated plan. Another form of organization in the second movement is the return of material from the first movement. For example, in mm. 66 and 67, the open fifth to minor sixth from the beginning of the first movement separates the two large A sections in the second movement (see Figure 11). In m. 172, the horn line also features the familiar descending half step glissando introducing the final melancholic section of the piece, as if the revived wolf had just run off into the distance (see Figure 12).

Table 2: Form of Movement 2 of *Songs of the Wolf*

<i>Songs of the Wolf</i> Movement 2 Form								
A			A'			B		
a	b	c	a'	b'	c'	d	e	f
mm. 1-17	mm. 18-34	mm. 35-67	mm. 68-88	mm. 89-99	mm. 100-115	mm. 116-139	mm. 140-170	mm. 171-end



Figure 11: *Songs of the Wolf* movement 2, mm. 66-67 return of first movement material.



Figure 12: *Songs of the Wolf* movement 2, mm. 171-173 return of the descending glissando.

Another significant component of Clearfield's composition in *Songs of the Wolf* is her use of rhythm, time, and meter. In the first movement, while there are many sustained notes, she also contrasts this with sections that are highly rhythmic. In m. 64, the piano introduces an irregular rhythmic line that includes varying compound time signatures that create ambiguity in the sense of predictability (see Figure 13). Another rhythmic technique that Clearfield uses in the first movement is the use of duple rhythms against compound meter. For example, in m. 137 the piano line is subdivided into duple rhythms against a 6/8 meter, eventually being joined by the stopped horn. In doing this, Clearfield once again creates metrical ambiguity (see Figure 14).



Figure 13: *Songs of the Wolf* movement 1, mm. 64-68 example of varying compound time signatures.



Figure 14: *Songs of the Wolf* movement 1, mm. 137-141 duple rhythms against compound meter.

At m. 116 in the second movement, after playing many fast-paced sixteenth notes in the previous section, the piano holds an A-major chord for twelve measures, followed by open fifths on A and E for five more measures after that. While this is happening, the left hand of the piano plays a short six beat long ostinato line carefully placed among the held notes. The sparseness of the piano line allows the horn line to play a series of low creeping figures, eventually leading to the cadenza (see Figure 15). After the cadenza, the piano picks up with an exciting presto section that also features many shifting time signatures along with horn glissandos into a piano-and-horn unison rhythm in the horn's higher range. This presto section occurring after the howling of the wolf in the cadenza symbolizes the wolf running from the Wolf Woman after she has brought it to life (see Figure 16).



Figure 15: *Songs of the Wolf* movement 2, mm. 116-122 sparse piano line with an ostinato below the creeping horn line.



Figure 16: *Songs of the Wolf* movement 2, mm. 145-153 presto section with horn glissandos.

*Songs of the Wolf* is not Clearfield's only piece for horn and piano that attests to her abilities as a modern composer. *River Melos*, composed in 2014, was commissioned for and premiered by Denise Tryon first in Japan, and then at Peabody Conservatory for the United States premier.<sup>7</sup> Tryon, a well-known and highly regarded low-horn payer, included *River Melos* in her album *So Low*, an album dedicated to solos for low-horn. Tryon has said that the low-horn range is often disregarded for solo works, solely because the higher range of the horn has been seen as a more suitable melodic and soloistic range. With Tryon's album, she was hoping to make room for an increase in low-horn repertoire in the horn canon and to showcase such an underrepresented aspect of horn playing.<sup>8</sup>

"River melos," translates to "river melody," and the piece is supposed to represent a flowing river. In a river, water expands, contracts, and continuously flows along its desired path. The river that inspired the piece is the Roaring Fork River, located in Aspen, Colorado, where Clearfield spent her summers at the Aspen Music Festival when she was younger.<sup>9</sup> Just as imagery was highly significant in *Songs of the Wolf*, Clearfield once again wrote *River Melos* to

<sup>7</sup> "River Melos," Andrea Clearfield, composer website, Andrea Clearfield, updated 2012, <http://www.andreaclearfield.com/works/chamber/river-melos/>.

<sup>8</sup> Michelle Stebleton, "An Interview with Denise Tryon," *The Horn Call* 49, no. 1 (October 2018): 62.

<sup>9</sup> "River Melos," Andrea Clearfield, composer website.

evoke images of the Roaring Fork River and to allow the listener to feel the motion of a flowing, rolling river moving between mountains in Aspen.

One of the most important compositional components of *River Melos* is Clearfield's use of melody. There are two main melodies that occur at the beginning of the piece that are developed by both the horn and piano throughout the remainder of the piece. The river melody is first seen in the horn entrance from mm. 7-12 (see Figure 17). Along with the river melody in the horn, the piano has a countermelody in mm. 3-6 (see Figure 18). An example of the development that occurs to the river melody during the piece is in mm. 148-154 when the melody begins in the horn line, but is completed in the piano line (see Figure 19).



Figure 17: *River Melos*, mm. 7-12 horn melody.

Figure 18: *River Melos*, mm. 3-6 piano melody.



Figure 19: *River Melos*, mm. 148-154 development of melodies passed between horn and piano.

A contributing factor to the development of the melodies in *River Melos* is the form of the piece. The form, like the melodies, is constantly ebbing and flowing like a river and is not strict in any way. The best way to organize the piece is for it to be viewed as a theme and variations, with the theme being comprised of the two opening melodies in the horn and piano, followed by nine variations, with the eighth variation being a horn cadenza. While there are many instances where the horn has intricate runs and may seem to be falling away from the melodies, the piano holds steady and utilizes the melodies to tie the entire piece together despite how much the piece appears to roll and swell like a river.

Table 3: Form diagram of *River Melos*

River Melos Form									
Theme	Var. 1	Var. 2	Var. 3	Var. 4	Var. 5	Var. 6	Var. 7	Var. 8	Var. 9
mm. 1-36	mm. 37-74	mm. 75-91	mm. 92-120	mm. 121-127	mm. 128-142	mm. 143-163	mm. 164-185	mm. 186-200	mm. 201-end

The pitch structure of *River Melos* is another of Clearfield's compositional factors that add to the evocation of a river. The key of the piece, like the form, cannot be defined in a strict

term. It certainly is not an atonal piece, however, it is not entirely tonal either. The river theme begins around the key area of A-flat major, however it does not have a sense of stability. Even as the melodies move through their many developments, Clearfield avoids any strong sense of tonal stability. A tactic that Clearfield uses to create a limited sense of stability is her use of minor seconds to resolve notes up or down. For example, at the end of the piece, the horn holds a concert D-flat in mm. 208 and 209, which then resolves upward to a D-natural. Similarly, the horn also holds a concert G through m. 211, resolving downward to a G-flat in m. 212. After each of these minor-second resolutions, the horn then moves by much larger intervals, once again demonstrating the irregularity of a river. The last note in the horn is a concert C-flat, after resolving a minor second upward from the previous note. While the horn creates these flowing and irregular intervals, the piano continues to show the ambiguity of the tonality in the chords that it plays underneath. This peaceful ending to *River Melos* symbolizes a river becoming calm after many twists and turns (see Figure 20).



Figure 20: *River Melos*, horn part at the end of the piece showing the use of half steps, mm. 208-209 and mm. 211-212 as examples.

*River Melos* is a quintessential example of a solo work for low horn. The range of the horn greatly contributes to the effectiveness of the piece. While music written for high horn is typically used for melodic and soloistic pieces, the horn's low register has the ability to create a vastly different tone. The middle-to-low range of the horn creates a lovely mellow tone, and



showcases the horn's versatility in stretching its abilities among many registers, which is not a common quality in many wind instruments. Clearfield's use of the low range of the horn also takes an unconventional approach, utilizing quick runs of sixteenth notes and triplets, which is an uncommon way to write for that range, as it is very difficult to execute. The highest note of the piece occurs in m. 164, which happens to be in the high range of the horn. The horn's Bb in that measure contrasts sharply with the low range of the rest of the piece, making both the low range and that high point even more dramatic and effective (see Figure 21). The lowest moment in the horn part also happens to occur only six measures after the highest movement (see Figure 22).



Figure 21: *River Melos*, mm. 163-164, the highest moment in the horn part.



Figure 22: *River Melos*, mm. 166-172, the lowest moment in the horn part, a pedal E.

The sixteenth-note and triplet runs that Clearfield uses to showcase the low horn register are used in many different ways throughout *River Melos* to show the development of the melodies. For example, in variation three, the time in the piece appears to be calm and slow, just as the original theme was, however the rhythms in the horn quickly develop and evolve into much more complex and involved rhythms than previously. Clearfield also contrasts the complex runs in the horn part with the piano, which retains the lilting and flowing motion of eighth notes from the theme, as seen in mm. 111-120 (see Figure 23).

The image displays a musical score for two instruments: Horn and Piano. The Horn part, starting at measure 111, is characterized by a highly technical and rapid line, featuring many sixteenth-note runs and trills. The Piano part provides a melodic accompaniment, with sustained chords and moving lines. The score includes markings for 'poco accel.' (poco accelerando) and 'quasi-gliss' (quasi-glissando). The key signature is one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is 4/4. The score is divided into two systems, with measures 111-115 in the first system and measures 116-120 in the second system.

Figure 23: *River Melos*, mm. 111-120 technical horn line against melodic piano line.

After analyzing the compositional techniques in *Songs of the Wolf* and *River Melos*, it is evident that Clearfield's talents as a composer are admiral. Her abilities have earned her acclaim as a highly respected composer in the present climate, especially as a composer of horn music. With her aptitude for succeeding in testing the capabilities of the horn, Clearfield substantiates the importance of the place of women composers in the music composition field.

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